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AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN TEXAS: THIRD QUARTER 2004

Dallas County Pay Level Leads the State; Counties Along Texas-Mexico Border Among the Lowest Paid in the Nation

In the third quarter of 2004, Dallas County's weekly wage averaged \$889, ranking first among the 24 Texas counties with 75,000 or more jobs. At the lower end of the wage scale were a number of counties along the Texas-Mexico border. Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman noted that at \$468 per week, the average weekly wage in Cameron County was not only the lowest among Texas' largest counties, but also the lowest among 317 large counties nationwide.

The average weekly wage in Dallas County was followed closely by the \$862 per week earned in Harris County. Dallas and Harris Counties ranked 34th and 44th, respectively, in level of pay among the nation's largest counties. (See table 1.) Four other large Texas counties (Travis, Collin, Tarrant, and Williamson) reported average weekly wages above the national figure of \$733. While the 18 remaining large counties in Texas had wages below that for the nation, two of these (Fort Bend and Brazoria) were within 5 percent of the U.S. average. Three of the four lowest-paying large counties in the nation were located in Texas – all along the border with Mexico. Average weekly wages in Cameron (\$468), Hidalgo (\$475), and Webb (\$496) Counties ranked 317th, 316th, and 314th in the U.S., joining Horry County, S.C. (\$487) and Yakima County, Wash. (\$500) at the lowest end of the wage spectrum. Three other counties in Texas also ranked near the bottom in average weekly wages. The border county of El Paso averaged \$531 per week and was 309th. The interior counties of Brazos and Lubbock ranked 307th and 305th, respectively.

Among the 317 large counties in the nation, New York County, N.Y., recorded the highest average weekly wage at \$1,327. Santa Clara, Calif., was second with an average weekly wage of \$1,308, followed by Washington, D.C. (\$1,207), and Arlington, Va. (\$1,196). Three of the ten counties with the highest wages in the U.S. were located in the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y., Fairfield, Conn., and Somerset, N.J.), three others were located in or around the San Francisco area (Santa Clara, San Mateo, and San Francisco, all in California), while three more were located in or around the Washington D.C. metropolitan area (Washington, D.C., Arlington, Va., and Fairfax, Va.). Rounding out the top10 was Suffolk County, Mass., part of the Boston metropolitan area.

Average Weekly Wages in Texas, Third Quarter 2004 (continued)

At the State level, the average weekly wage in Texas was \$719, slightly below the \$733 nationwide figure. (See table 2.) Despite a lower than average weekly wage, Texas ranked 18th highest among the 50 states. Nationally, the four highest wage levels were in the District of Columbia (\$1,207), Connecticut (\$917), Massachusetts (\$907), and New York (\$891). Average weekly wages in this group were more than 20 percent above the national average. At the other end of the scale, four states had wages 75 percent or less of national earnings: Montana (\$525), South Dakota (\$538), Mississippi (\$540), and North Dakota (\$548).

Over-the-year changes

While only 6 of the 24 large counties in Texas registered pay levels above the national average, 11 recorded wage growth that equaled or exceeded the national increase of 4.0 percent. Smith County, Texas, led the State with an average weekly wage gain of 6.1 percent between the third quarter of 2003 and the third quarter of 2004 and ranked 24th highest among the nation's largest counties. Several other Texas counties ranked in the top 60: Potter (34th), Nueces (53rd), and Tarrant (60th). Of note, the three lowest-paying counties in the State (Cameron, Hidalgo, and Webb) all had higher wage increases than the national average. Only one county in Texas, Williamson, recorded a wage decline during the period; it was one of only seven large counties nationwide to do so. Williamson County's 0.4-percent decrease in wages over the year ranked 307th. Two other Texas counties also ranked in the bottom 20 nationally; Lubbock County posted a gain of 0.7 percent and ranked 302nd and Collin County registered a 1.0-percent increase and ranked 299th.

St. Joseph County, Ind., led the nation in average weekly wage growth with an increase of 10.4 percent. Suffolk County, Mass., was second with 9.1-percent growth, followed by the counties of Loudoun, Va. (8.4 percent), Rockingham, N.H. (8.1 percent), and Arlington, Va. (7.7 percent). Seven others experienced over-the-year declines in average weekly wages, led by Kalamazoo County, Mich. (-7.7 percent). Arapahoe, Colo. (-7.3 percent) was next, then Somerset, N.J. (-6.9 percent), and King, Wash. (-2.4 percent). (A change in the definition of wages covered by unemployment insurance in the State of Washington contributed to the decline in King County.)

Between the third quarter of 2003 and the third quarter of 2004, statewide average weekly wages in Texas grew by 3.6 percent, somewhat below the national advance of 4.0 percent. The smaller wage increase in Texas placed the State's growth rate in the bottom half (37th) of the nationwide ranking. The District of Columbia, with the highest wage level in the nation, also led the U.S. in over-the-year wage growth at 7.6 percent. New Hampshire and Vermont were next with increases of 6.1 and 5.8 percent, respectively. Vermont was closely followed by Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York – three states with wage levels well above the national average. The State of Washington reported the slowest wage growth in the nation at 0.4 percent and no state reported a decline.

Industry detail

Average weekly wages by industry sector are available for two of Texas' large counties, Harris and Dallas, the 4th and 6th largest counties in the U.S., respectively.

Average Weekly Wages in Texas, Third Quarter 2004 (continued)

In Harris County, the natural resources and mining industry supersector reported the highest average weekly wage at \$2,018, more than three times the U.S. average. (See table 3.) Locally, the wage level in natural resources and mining was nearly twice as high as the wages in the next three supersectors – manufacturing (\$1,080), information (\$1,064), and financial activities (\$1,046). Not far behind these industries was professional and business services at \$988. The lowest-paying supersector was leisure and hospitality (\$323), partially reflecting its relatively large share of part-time employment. Over-the-year wage increases in Harris County ranged from a robust 11.1 percent in natural resources and mining to a sluggish 0.1 percent in government. Nationwide, natural resources and mining also led all industry groups with a 7.7-percent advance in wages; however, it was not the highest-paying supersector in the country. Nationally, information was the top-paying supersector averaging \$1,120, followed by financial activities at \$1,039.

As in Harris County, the natural resources and mining supersector was also the highest-paying industry group in Dallas County at \$2,143 per week. The next three highest-paying supersectors in Dallas County averaged around \$1000 less, exhibiting a pattern similar to that of Harris County. However, the rank order of these three industries was different. In Dallas County, the second highest pay level was in information (\$1,222), followed by financial activities (\$1,115) and manufacturing (\$1,013). Leisure and hospitality was the lowest-paying supersector in Dallas as well as in the nation; however, Dallas' wage, at \$401 per week, was more than 25 percent above the U.S. average of \$314. Locally, the fastest over-the-year wage growth occurred in manufacturing with a gain of 5.7 percent. Natural resources and mining was the only supersector in Dallas County to experience a wage decline, dropping 10.3 percent.

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from reports submitted by employers subject to unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The 8.4 million employer reports cover 130.2 million full- and part-time jobs. The average weekly wage is computed by dividing the total quarterly payroll of employees covered by UI programs by the average monthly number of these employees. This number then is divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. It is to be noted, therefore, that over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Thus, wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or States for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas, counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>; however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised (see Note below) and will not match the data contained on the Bureau's Web site.

Additional statistics and other information

An annual bulletin, *Employment and Wages*, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. *Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2003* is available for sale from the BLS Publications Sales Center, P.O. Box 2145, Chicago, Illinois 60690, telephone 312-353-1880. The bulletin is now available in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn03.htm>. Also, the quarterly press release, County Employment and Wages, presents employment and wage data for the largest counties in the U.S. and is available at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>.

Average Weekly Wages in Texas, Third Quarter 2004 (continued)

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

For personal assistance or further information on the Quarterly Covered Employment and Wages Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Dallas Information Office at 214-767-6970 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. CT. This release is available in text and PDF format on the Dallas BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/ro6/home.htm>. Users may also obtain the release from the Bureau's fax-on-demand service in Dallas by dialing 214-767-9613 and requesting document number 9560.

NOTE

QCEW data are the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. For this reason, county and industry data are not designed to be used as a time series.

The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS website. The potential differences result from several causes. Differences between BLS and State published data may be due to the continuing receipt, review, and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS website are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (noneconomic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

Table 1. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States and the 24 largest counties in Texas, third quarter 2004 (2)

Area	Employment	Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	September 2004 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National rank by level	Percent change, 2003-04 (4)	National rank by percent change
United States (5).....	130,248.9	\$733	-	4.0	-
Texas	9,357.6	719	-	3.6	-
Bell, TX.....	91.5	573	296	4.0	138
Bexar, TX.....	661.0	644	225	4.2	120
Brazoria, TX.....	76.1	693	161	3.0	217
Brazos, TX.....	78.9	535	307	2.7	238
Cameron, TX.....	115.6	468	316	4.7	77
Collin, TX.....	211.8	797	70	1.0	299
Dallas, TX.....	1,438.0	889	34	3.0	217
Denton, TX.....	133.2	639	230	2.9	224
El Paso, TX.....	254.5	531	309	4.5	102
Fort Bend, TX.....	102.3	729	123	2.1	276
Galveston, TX.....	86.6	641	228	3.9	147
Harris, TX.....	1,838.1	862	44	4.5	102
Hidalgo, TX.....	185.3	475	315	4.2	120
Jefferson, TX.....	117.2	661	206	2.6	247
Lubbock, TX.....	118.5	554	305	0.7	302
McLennan, TX.....	99.4	583	291	1.7	286
Montgomery, TX.....	92.8	654	212	3.0	217
Nueces, TX.....	143.3	612	263	5.2	53
Potter, TX.....	76.5	585	288	5.6	34
Smith, TX.....	86.8	648	218	6.1	24
Tarrant, TX.....	701.0	758	97	5.0	60
Travis, TX.....	516.3	824	54	2.4	262
Webb, TX.....	78.0	496	313	4.4	111
Williamson, TX.....	87.0	746	104	-0.4	307

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for any noneconomic county reclassifications.

(5) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

Table 2. Covered (1) employment and wages by state, third quarter 2004 (2)

State	Employment	Average weekly wage (3)			
	September 2004 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National rank by level	Percent change, 2003-04	National rank by percent change
United States (4).....	130,248.9	\$733	-	4.0	-
Alabama.....	1,858.0	629	33	3.6	37
Alaska.....	314.2	755	13	3.4	42
Arizona.....	2,357.6	691	22	4.9	10
Arkansas.....	1,145.7	570	45	5.2	7
California.....	15,106.6	829	6	3.9	32
Colorado.....	2,163.4	752	15	1.1	50
Connecticut.....	1,642.1	917	2	5.4	5
Delaware.....	414.9	769	9	2.1	49
District of Columbia.....	658.3	1,207	1	7.6	1
Florida.....	7,397.2	655	27	4.5	16
Georgia.....	3,837.8	711	19	3.8	35
Hawaii.....	585.6	676	24	4.5	16
Idaho.....	608.1	569	46	4.0	30
Illinois.....	5,747.7	779	8	3.9	32
Indiana.....	2,887.8	655	27	4.5	16
Iowa.....	1,431.8	604	37	4.1	24
Kansas.....	1,304.8	620	34	4.6	13
Kentucky.....	1,742.9	619	35	4.4	19
Louisiana.....	1,861.1	595	41	2.8	47
Maine.....	608.8	603	39	4.3	21
Maryland.....	2,479.5	795	7	4.2	23
Massachusetts.....	3,156.5	907	3	5.5	4
Michigan.....	4,344.5	757	10	3.4	42
Minnesota.....	2,629.9	753	14	3.2	44
Mississippi.....	1,113.8	540	49	3.6	37
Missouri.....	2,656.2	655	27	3.0	46
Montana.....	413.0	525	51	3.6	37
Nebraska.....	887.4	601	40	3.6	37
Nevada.....	1,168.5	703	21	4.1	24
New Hampshire.....	622.6	731	16	6.1	2
New Jersey.....	3,918.8	876	5	2.8	47
New Mexico.....	769.3	588	43	4.1	24
New York.....	8,307.9	891	4	5.3	6
North Carolina.....	3,814.9	654	30	4.1	24
North Dakota.....	327.2	548	48	4.0	30
Ohio.....	5,333.0	685	23	4.1	24
Oklahoma.....	1,435.7	581	44	3.9	32
Oregon.....	1,627.6	676	24	3.7	36
Pennsylvania.....	5,531.4	722	17	4.3	21
Rhode Island.....	484.6	708	20	4.6	13
South Carolina.....	1,799.2	604	37	4.1	24
South Dakota.....	375.5	538	50	4.9	10
Tennessee.....	2,668.6	659	26	4.4	19
Texas.....	9,357.6	719	18	3.6	37
Utah.....	1,084.4	607	36	3.2	44
Vermont.....	302.0	634	32	5.8	3
Virginia.....	3,522.7	757	10	4.6	13
Washington.....	2,749.9	756	12	0.4	51
West Virginia.....	693.1	559	47	5.1	8
Wisconsin.....	2,745.6	653	31	4.8	12
Wyoming.....	253.6	590	42	5.0	9

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

Table 3. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States, Harris County, Texas, and Dallas County, Texas, third quarter 2004 (2)

Area and Supersector	Employment September 2004 (thousands)	Average weekly wage (3)	
		Average weekly wage	Percent change, 2003-04 (4)
United States (5).....	130,248.9	\$733	4.0
Private industry.....	109,436.9	724	4.0
Natural resources and mining.....	1,777.2	654	7.7
Construction.....	7,167.2	769	3.4
Manufacturing.....	14,332.0	898	5.2
Trade, transportation, and utilities.....	25,216.7	648	3.8
Information.....	3,062.0	1,120	1.8
Financial activities.....	7,899.5	1,039	4.0
Professional and business services.....	16,486.7	859	4.4
Education and health services.....	16,097.5	704	4.5
Leisure and hospitality.....	12,747.5	314	3.0
Other services.....	4,281.7	477	3.2
Government.....	20,812.0	781	4.1
Harris, TX.....	1,838.1	862	4.5
Private industry.....	1,594.9	871	5.1
Natural resources and mining.....	63.1	2,018	11.1
Construction.....	129.7	842	6.4
Manufacturing.....	163.9	1,080	6.6
Trade, transportation, and utilities.....	388.5	782	2.6
Information.....	33.4	1,064	3.7
Financial activities.....	114.6	1,046	0.7
Professional and business services.....	289.7	988	8.0
Education and health services.....	188.8	781	3.6
Leisure and hospitality.....	161.5	323	1.6
Other services.....	57.1	513	2.6
Government.....	243.2	796	0.1
Dallas, TX.....	1,438.0	889	3.0
Private industry.....	1,281.0	894	3.1
Natural resources and mining.....	6.5	2,143	-10.3
Construction.....	76.5	798	3.4
Manufacturing.....	144.2	1,013	5.7
Trade, transportation, and utilities.....	310.0	879	4.8
Information.....	59.2	1,222	2.5
Financial activities.....	140.1	1,115	1.4
Professional and business services.....	244.6	962	1.7
Education and health services.....	130.8	862	5.3
Leisure and hospitality.....	126.0	401	0.3
Other services.....	39.7	570	2.7
Government.....	157.0	840	(6)

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for any noneconomic county and industry reclassifications.

(5) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(6) Data do not meet BLS or State Agency disclosure standards.